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RELEASED IN PART  
B6, B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00
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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2472  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
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USIA WASHDC 1999  
USDOC WASHDC 3291  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 003621

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/03  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN, VE  
SUBJECT: POLLING THE POLLSTERS IN THE HOME STRETCH

REF: (A) CARACAS 3287, (B) CARACAS 3320, (C) CARACAS 3332, (D)  
CARACAS 3357, (E) CARACAS 3378, (F) CARACAS 3416, (G) CARACAS 3424,  
(H) CARACAS 3429, (I) CARACAS 3431

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(D)

REASON: 1.5

B6

## SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CLASSIFIED BY DEPT. OF STATE, L. HEDGBETH, n/a

DAS, A/GIS

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON

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2. (U) TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION, MOST POLLSTERS SAY CHAVEZ IS THE ODDS ON FAVORITE TO WIN THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTION. ATTACKS BY TRADITIONAL PARTIES AGAINST SALAS FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER 8

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ELECTIONS STOPPED SALAS' STEADY RISE IN THE POLLS AND CONSOLIDATED CHAVEZ'S SUPPORT BASE. EVENTS OF THE LAST WEEK--ESPECIALLY AD AND COPEI DECISION TO SUPPORT SALAS--HAVE POLARIZED THE ELECTION AND MADE SALAS THE "ANTI-CHAVEZ CANDIDATE." THIS HAS RESTORED SOME MOMENTUM TO SALAS' CAMPAIGN, GIVING HIM A RISE IN THE POLLS AND HOLDING OUT THE SLIM BUT UNLIKELY HOPE OF OVERCOMING HIS CURRENT GAP WITH CHAVEZ. CONTINUING VOTER VOLATILITY IS THE WILD CARD IN THIS ELECTION, AND CAUSES MOST POLLSTERS TO HEDGE THEIR PROJECTIONS AND PREDICTIONS. END SUMMARY.

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THE POLLSTER'S ELECTION ANALYSIS  
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3. (C) MOST POLLSTERS SAY CHAVEZ IS POISED TO WIN THE DECEMBER 6 ELECTION. DOXA AND CONSULTORES 21 THINK THAT CHAVEZ WILL WIN BY 10 POINTS. DATOS THINKS THE ELECTION WILL BE CLOSE; CHAVEZ HAS THE ADVANTAGE, BUT SALAS COULD STILL PULL OFF A VICTORY. DATANALISIS ARGUES, BASED ON A NATIONWIDE POLL COMPLETED ON DECEMBER 2ND, THAT CHAVEZ WILL WIN BY 15 PERCENTAGE POINTS. CVI'S LATEST POLLS (22 NOVEMBER) STILL HAS CHAVEZ WITH A SIX TO SEVEN POINT LEAD, BUT CIV PRESIDENT RODOLFO BARREDA ARGUES THAT SALAS STILL COULD WIN THE ELECTION.

4. (C) THE REASON FOR SOME CONFUSION AMONG THE POLLSTERS IS THAT A NUMBER OF VARIABLES HAVE BEEN ADDED INTO THE MIX IN THE LAST WEEK, WITH UNKNOWN CONSEQUENCES. IN CONSULTORES 21'S DAILY TRACKING POLL, SALAS HAS BEEN RISING SINCE THE 28TH OF NOVEMBER, AFTER THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES BEGAN TO RALLY AROUND HIM. CNE'S DECISION TO GIVE SALAS THE VOTES CAST FOR AD AND COPEI ALSO GIVES SALAS ANOTHER BOOST. THIS HAS ADDED A SLIM DEGREE OF CHANCE INTO,

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WHAT WAS, UNTIL LAST WEEK, A CERTAIN CHAVEZ VICTORY. THE QUESTION THEN BECOMES, CAN SALAS REALISTICALLY OVERTAKE CHAVEZ AT THIS LATE DATE, OR IS THIS LATEST TURN OF EVENTS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE? MOST POLLSTERS THINK THAT SALAS CANNOT WIN AT THIS POINT, BUT ALL ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE CONTINUED FLUIDITY OF THE ELECTORATE MEANS THAT THE ONLY THING CONSTANT ABOUT THE VOTERS' INTENTIONS IS THAT THEY ARE SUBJECT TO RAPID CHANGE.

5. (C) ALL OF THE POLLSTERS ARE FAIRLY UNIFORM IN THEIR ANALYSIS OF HOW SALAS WENT FROM BEING THE ODDS ON FAVORITE IN LATE OCTOBER AND EARLY NOVEMBER TO TRAILING CHAVEZ IN LATE NOVEMBER. AS WE POINTED OUT IN LATE OCTOBER IN REF A, THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT STOOD TO EFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WERE THE OUTCOME OF THE NOVEMBER 8 ELECTIONS AND THE FUTURE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY OF AD. THE POLLSTERS ARGUE THAT NOVEMBER 8 DEMONSTRATED THE STRENGTH OF POLO PATRIOTICO, THE CONTINUED STRENGTH OF AD, AND THE WEAKNESS OF SALAS' PROYECTO VENEZUELA. BASED ON THE ELECTION RESULTS, AD (OR AT LEAST ITS CANDIDATE LUIS ALFARO), CONCLUDED THAT AD WAS THE ONLY FORCE THAT COULD STOP CHAVEZ. AD BEGAN CAMPAIGNING ON THE THEME THAT NOVEMBER 8 WAS AN AD VICTORY. THIS BENEFITED CHAVEZ IN TWO WAYS. FIRST, SOME UNDECIDED ANTI-CHAVEZ VOTERS WHO WERE LEANING TOWARDS SALAS TOOK A NEW LOOK AT ALFARO, ESPECIALLY AS

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INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
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	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/019W			

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O 032316Z DEC 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2473  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2000  
USDOC WASHDC 3292

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DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
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AMEMBASSY LIMA  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 CARACAS 003621

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REF: (A) CARACAS 3287, (B) CARACAS 3320, (C) CARACAS 3332, (D)  
ALFARO BEGAN ARGUING THAT SALAS WAS AN OLIGARCH WHO WAS JUST AS BAD  
AS CHAVEZ. THIS HELPED TO STOP SALAS' RISE IN THE POLLS. SECOND,  
NOVEMBER 8 DEMONSTRATED THAT AD WAS STILL A STRONG POLITICAL FORCE.  
AS CHAVEZ HAD POSITIONED HIMSELF AS THE CANDIDATE WHO "WILL BOIL  
THE ADECOS IN OIL," CHAVEZ BEGAN TO GAIN NEW ANTI-AD VOTERS. THIS  
TREND WAS STRENGTHENED LATER IN NOVEMBER, AS AD AND COPEI BEGAN  
UNDERGOING MASSIVE INTERNAL CONVULSIONS, BEGINNING THE PROCESS OF  
JETTISONING THEIR CANDIDATES IN FAVOR OF SALAS. THE PUBLIC TURMOIL  
INSIDE THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES DEMONSTRATED HOW TERRIFIED THESE  
PARTIES WERE OF CHAVEZ. THOSE VOTERS WHO WANTED TO PUNISH THE  
TRADITIONAL PARTIES REALIZED THAT CHAVEZ WAS THE BEST WAY TO DO IT.  
CHAVEZ CONTINUED TO RUN A SOLID CAMPAIGN. SALAS, IN TURN, WAS SEEN  
BY THE ELECTORATE AS NOT BEING ASSERTIVE ENOUGH, DATOS ARGUES.

6. (C) BY END OF LAST WEEK, THE SALAS RISE HAD BEEN HALTED AND  
REVERSED, LEAVING SALAS WITH A DEFICIT OF ANYWHERE FROM 8 TO 20  
POINTS, DEPENDING ON THE POLLSTER. THE SUBSEQUENT AD/COPEI  
DECISION TO SUPPORT SALAS POLARIZED THE ELECTION, MAKING SALAS THE  
"ANTI-CHAVEZ" CANDIDATE, AND MAY HAVE GIVEN NEW IMPETUS TO THE  
SALAS CAMPAIGN. ALL POLLSTERS ARGUE THAT IF AD AND COPEI HAD COME  
OUT JUST AFTER THE NOVEMBER 8 ELECTIONS AND HAD GIVEN THE GREEN  
LIGHT TO THEIR FOLLOWERS TO VOTE THEIR CONSCIENCE IN DECEMBER,  
SALAS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE LIKELY WINNER THIS SUNDAY. AD/COPEI  
SUPPORT CAME IN THE 11TH HOUR, AND THEN CAME IN THE FORM OF

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OFFICIAL ENDORSEMENT, RATHER THAN FREEING ADHERENTS TO VOTE THEIR

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CONSCIENCE. NOW, AS DOXA AND CONSULTORES 21 ARGUE, A VOTE AGAINST SALAS CAN BE SEEN AS A VOTE AGAINST THE TRADITIONAL SYSTEM. THOSE SALAS SUPPORTERS WHO REALLY WANTED TO END THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM, AND BELIEVED SALAS REPRESENTED "EL CAMBIO RADICAL", MIGHT FIND IT DIFFICULT TO NOW VOTE FOR THE AD AND COPEI ENDORSED CANDIDATE. THEY MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO VOTE FOR CHAVEZ, ABSTAIN, OR THROW THEIR VOTE AWAY ON ONE OF THE MINOR CANDIDATES. THIS PHENOMENA MAY CANCEL OUT THE NEW VOTES THAT THE AD/COPEI MACHINES ARE ABLE TO BRING TO SALAS. THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE MANY VARIABLES THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY AND WILL HAVE A DETERMINING EFFECT ON THE ELECTION.

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KEY DETERMINING FACTORS  
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7. (C) THERE ARE SEVERAL KEY FACTORS THAT WILL BE CRUCIAL IN DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF THIS ELECTION:

A. THE COMPOSITION OF THE VOTER TURNOUT.

AS WITH THE NOVEMBER ELECTION IN THE UNITED STATES, THE VOTER DEMOGRAPHICS ON ELECTION DAY CAN HAVE VERY IMPORTANT EFFECTS ON THE ELECTION RESULTS, AND CAN CONFOUND EVEN THE BEST POLLSTERS' PREDICTIONS. SALAS HAS AN ADVANTAGE AMONG WOMEN, THOSE UNDER 30, AND THE MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES. CHAVEZ IS STRONG AMONG THE POOR (ESPECIALLY IN THE URBAN BARRIOS), MEN, AND THOSE OVER 30. MOST POLLSTERS ARE NOW REVISING THEIR EARLIER ESTIMATES OF A MASSIVE TURNOUT THIS SUNDAY FROM 80-88 PERCENT, TO 65-70 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. THIS IS PARTIALLY BASED ON THE TURNOUT ON NOVEMBER 8,

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WHICH WAS LESS THAN PREDICTED, AND ALSO ON THE FACT IT IS NOW A TWO-MAN RACE THAT MAY CAUSE MANY VOTERS WHO DO NOT LIKE EITHER CANDIDATE TO ABSTAIN. IN THE PAST, LOWER VOTER TURNOUT WOULD MOST LIKELY HAVE HELPED SALAS BECAUSE THE POOR, WHERE CHAVEZ HAS A TWO TO ONE ADVANTAGE, ARE GENERALLY LEAST LIKELY TO VOTE. HOWEVER, AN ANALYSIS OF CVI'S RECENT POLLS SHOWS THAT THE POOR ARE NOW JUST AS LIKELY TO SAY THEY WILL DEFINITELY VOTE AS THE MORE WELL-TO-DO. DATANALISIS' MOST RECENT POLL ALSO CONFIRMS THIS PHENOMENA. IN CONSULTORES 21'S POLLS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, SALAS IS BEGINNING TO SHOW AN ADVANTAGE WITH ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS, BUT CHAVEZ STILL HAS A LARGE ADVANTAGE WITH THOSE MOST LIKELY TO VOTE. IT IS REALLY NOT SO MUCH THE SIZE OF THE TURNOUT, BUT THE COMPOSITION. IF THE POOR URBAN BARRIOS TURN OUT EN MASSE, CHAVEZ'S CHANCES OF VICTORY ARE GREATLY ENHANCED. IF THE URBAN POOR DO NOT PARTICIPATE HEAVILY, AND THE YOUNG AND WOMEN POUR INTO THE VOTING BOOTHS, SALAS' CHANCES RISE DRAMATICALLY.

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B. HOW MANY VOTES CAN THE AD/COPEI MACHINES BRING IN FOR SALAS.

AD AND COPEI HAVE STATED THAT THEY CAN BRING IN OVER 2 MILLION NEW VOTES FOR SALAS. ALMOST ALL ANALYSTS FEEL THESE NUMBERS ARE INFLATED, ALTHOUGH TO WHAT DEGREE IS HARD TO DETERMINE. THE AD AND

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01	CTME-00
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	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/019W			

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O 032316Z DEC 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2474  
INFO CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 2001  
USDOC WASHDC 3293  
DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
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REF: (A) CARACAS 3287, (B) CARACAS 3320, (C) CARACAS 3332, (D) COPEI GOVERNORS HAVE THE ABILITY TO USE ALL LOCAL OFFICIALS TO GET OUT THE VOTE AND TO BUS VOTERS TO THE POLLS. HOWEVER, THE AD/COPEI LEADERSHIPS' EXPECTATIONS THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO SWING ALL OF THE VOTES THEY WON IN NOVEMBER TO SALAS IS OFF THE MARK BECAUSE THE NOVEMBER VOTE WAS BASED ON LOCAL ISSUES, AND NOT A MEASURE OF SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL STRUCTURES OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES. VOTERS WHO VOTED FOR AD AND COPEI IN NOVEMBER WILL NOT NECESSARILY VOTE THAT WAY IN DECEMBER. THE POLLS HAVE CONSISTENTLY SHOWN AD AND COPEI VOTERS DIVIDED AMONG THEIR OWN CANDIDATES, SALAS, AND CHAVEZ. ALSO, AS DATANALYSIS ARGUES, THE WAY AD AND COPEI IGNOMINIOUSLY DUMPED THEIR OWN CANDIDATES AT THE LAST MINUTE APPALLED MANY LONG TIME AD/COPEI ADHERENTS, WHICH WILL MAKE IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES TO MOBILIZE THEM ON ELECTION DAY. WHETHER AD AND COPEI CAN RALLY THEIR TROOPS AROUND SALAS IN THE 11TH HOUR AND GET THEM IN DROVES TO THE POLLS IS THE WILDCARD THAT SALAS' CAMPAIGN IS DEPENDING ON.

C. HOW MANY SALAS VOTERS WILL DEFECT OR ABSTAIN BECAUSE OF AD'S AND COPEI'S FORMAL ENDORSEMENT OF SALAS.

THIS VARIABLE COULD CANCEL OUT THE BENEFIT SALAS RECEIVES FROM FACTOR B. COPEI'S FORMAL ENDORSEMENT OF IRENE EVENTUALLY HELPED KILL HER CAMPAIGN. HOWEVER, IRENE'S DECLINE TOOK A COUPLE OF MONTHS. EDMUND SAADE OF DATOS ALSO ARGUES THAT IT WASN'T JUST

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COPEI'S ENDORSEMENT THAT KILLED IRENE. SHE HAD NO SUBSTANCE TO HER CAMPAIGN, WHICH EVENTUALLY BECAME EVIDENT TO THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE. SALAS DOES NOT SUFFER FROM THIS DEFECT. THE FACT THAT ALFARO, ARGUABLY THE MOST HATED POLITICIAN IN VENEZUELA, CONTINUES TO ATTACK SALAS UNDOUBTEDLY HELPS SALAS SOMEWHAT.

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COMMENT  
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8. (U) CHAVEZ'S POPULARITY WAS DRIVEN BY POPULAR ANGER WITH A POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT MANY FEEL HAS NOT DELIVERED ON PAST PROMISES OF A BETTER LIFE AND HAS DENIED THEM, UNTIL NOW, A REAL ROLE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE. THE OPTION OF AN ALTERNATIVE TO CHAVEZ THAT WOULD BRING THE DESIRED CHANGE TO THE SYSTEM WITHOUT THE POTENTIAL THREATS TO DEMOCRACY THAT CHAVEZ CARRIES HAS BEEN WEAKENED, PERHAPS FATALLY, BY THE ACTIONS OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES, PRINCIPALLY AD.

\_\_\_\_\_ "IN THREE WEEKS, AD HAS MANAGED TO WRECK WHAT SALAS HAD CAREFULLY BUILT OVER THE COURSE OF THREE MONTHS." AD AND COPEI HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE TO REDEEM THEMSELVES BY BRINGING IN MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF VOTES ON ELECTION DAY. MANY THINK IT IS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.

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9. (U) SALAS IS NOT COMPLETELY WITHOUT HOPE. AS MANY POLLSTERS HAVE POINTED OUT, THIS ELECTION IS WITHOUT PRECEDENT. THE ELECTORATE IS SO VOLATILE, AND SO MANY NEW VARIABLES HAVE JUST RECENTLY COME INTO PLAY, THAT THIS ELECTION IS DIFFICULT TO CALL. SUNDAY'S ELECTION WILL PROVIDE THE ONLY POLL THAT WE CAN COUNT ON WITH CERTAINTY. A MAJORITY EXPECT THAT CHAVEZ WILL WIN THE ELECTION, WHICH SHOULD HELP CHAVEZ GAIN SOME VOTES ON ELECTION DAY DUE TO BANDWAGGONING. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS WILL ALSO PROVIDE A

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READY AUDIENCE FOR CHAVEZ TO PROCLAIM VOTER FRAUD IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A SALAS VICTORY. THIS IS PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS BECAUSE IF SALAS IS ABLE TO SOMEHOW OVERCOME THE ODDS AND WIN THE ELECTION, HIS MARGIN OF VICTORY WILL LIKELY BE VERY NARROW.

10. (U) ALL THE POLLSTERS POINT OUT THAT WHOEVER WINS THIS ELECTION IS GOING TO FACE A DEMANDING ELECTORATE, THE VAST MAJORITY OF WHICH EXPECT SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE FIRST 6-12 MONTHS OF THE NEW PRESIDENCY. THESE EXPECTATIONS WILL MEET THE WALL OF AN ECONOMY THAT WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO WORSEN. THIS PROBLEM WILL BE EXACERBATED IN THE EVENT OF A CHAVEZ VICTORY, AS THE POOR WHO VOTED HIM IN WILL DEMAND MUCH MORE FROM "THEIR" CANDIDATE. ALSO, POLLSTERS ARGUE, CHAVEZ WILL HAVE A MORE DIFFICULT TIME ASSURING FOREIGN INVESTORS AND IN WORKING WITH THE VENEZUELAN BUSINESS SECTOR THAN SALAS WOULD. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, THIS SUNDAY'S ELECTION WILL LIKELY BE THE START OF A CHALLENGING YEAR FOR VENEZUELA.

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